Mr. Harold Evans, President and Publisher
Random House Trade Group
201 E. 50 St.,
New York, NY 10022

Harold Weisberg
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10/25/96

Dear Mr. Evans,

In your Publisher's Letter in the No. 15 issue of At Random, for the fall of 1996, you state that "It was Posner who single-handedly and single-mindedly in 1993 finally put to rest all the conspiracy theories in the killing of President Kennedy in his incisive book Case Closed."

This statement is in such sharp conflict with the Random House Trade Group's publishing record I am impelled, if only to make a record for history, to write you about it.

(Please excuse my typing. I'm 83, in impaired health, and my typing cannot be any better.)

Knopf is now part of the Random House publishing empire. The year after Posner's book it published the former Random House editor Mark Riebling's Wedge. His assassination theory is in both the title and the subtitle, which is The Secret War Between the FBI and CIA. As Riebling tells the story of his assassination theory, it is his imagined war between the FBI and the CIA that is directly responsible for the assassination. That is what is praised to refer to it as a theory is Riebling's imagined wedge that the FBI drove between it and the CIA. It is as a result of that imagined wedge in the Riebling mythology that JFK was killed.

That you as president and publisher of the Random House Trade Group did not have competent (if any) peer reviews of the assassination books you published is what made their publication possible. Not one could gain informed peer approval.

Take Riebling. Whose scholarship is such he had to invent an entirely new system for identifying the sources on which he drew, their standard and well-known identifications not satisfying him. There was no such wedge other than in his mind and perhaps the minds of those who used him for their own ends. There was the most dangerous, really rabid political insanity in the CIA's Mexico City station that the FBI not only did not agree with but forced the CIA to establish that it was false. Without that World War III was a distinct possibility.

Either Riebling's scholarship did not include those public records or he found they'd have made his book impossible so he ignored them. They were public beginning before the assassination bug bit him.

Then the next year you had that bomb of publishing bombs, Norman Mailer's mistitled Oswald's Tale. As Mailer tells it at great and boring length it is really Oswald Stale. And the appropriate title would be Mailer's Tales, with the subtitle Of the JFK Assassination.

If Posner had "finally put to rest all the conspiracy theories" of the assassination, what in the world did you publish this disaster in publishing for? And why did your wife who edits The New Yorker devote so large a part of an issue to it? This does not seem to indicate that you or your wife considered it all "put to rest."

Or can it be that you were suckered as Mailer and his Svengali Larry Schiller were suckered by the KGB? Or is it that they suckered themselves in expecting ~~the~~ from the KGB what it did not have and could not give them? Again, all those theories were not "put to rest" two years before you published the Mailer mishmash.

There is the possibility, of course, that you were much taken by Mailer's mind-reading from the grave after 30 years. But apparently the reading public wasn't.

Two books following Posner's "finally putting to rest all the conspiracy theories on the killing of President Kennedy" were not enough for you. There is also Max Holland's announced history of the Warren Commission to be published by your Basic Books, according to the note at the end of the lengthy Holland shortened version of that coming book in the November American Heritage of last year.

Holland's is one of the more imaginative, if less comprehensible, theories not put to rest. As it is expressed in large type on that magazine's cover all of which is devoted to it, his theory is "about the Kennedy Assassination" and is about "Why the Warren Report was wrong - and right."

If this seems to suggest that it was because the Warren Report was wrong it was right, that is what Holland says. Literally, being wrong made it right. As theories go that is a lollapalooza.

I doubt it would interest Holland, after reading what he has to say in his magazine anticipation of his book, but according to not fewer than two members of the Warren Commission its Report was wrong and they refused to agree with its most basic conclusion. In fact at least two of these members, with a third possible, went to their graves insisting that the most basic conclusion of that Report is wrong and they never agreed with it and never would.

I have this documented if Holland wants to use it in his book. There is hardly a more authoritative expert on the Commission's work than its members and the most conservative of them, Senator Richard B. Russell, and next to Warren the most liberal of them, Republican Senator John Sherman Cooper, refused to agree to the single-bullet theory. They also believed, in the words Russell used in telling

me about it, that the federal agencies had not told them all they knew about Oswald. That was in 1968. Since 1992, under compulsion of the law, more than a quarter of a million pages of Oswald CIA records have been disclosed and that is far from all of them.

Russell forced an executive session after the Report was in page proof to record his refusal to agree with that single-bullet theory. (That is the one where your prize package Posner plagiarized part of a propaganda presentation and used it as work done for him.) In what I think - and surely do hope- is without precedent in our history that session was memory-holed. Yes, I have the official proof of that, too, if it interests your Holland theorizer. I also have Russell's copy of his remarks prepared for and delivered at that executive session. That is not theory but maybe Holland can accept it as theory and thus find some use for it.

It is apparent that you will not publish anything factual about the assassination so maybe you will not even refer this offer to Holland. Posner, who spent three days here with his wife, will tell him, if Holland does not recall from his projected book on Commission Member John McCloy (with Kai Bird) that I make all the records I obtained by more than a dozen FOIA lawsuits freely available to all writing in the field. Posner states this on page 504.

One would never guess from your version of it that Posner's book is based on theories, including several that he cribbed, including even from a child.

This and what else I wrote about Posner in Case Open may not be known to you but it is to your Bob Loomis and your legal people. I have word from inside Random House that when Case Open appeared Loomis prowled yuur offices clutching a copy and muttering, "Gotta find a way to sue that old son-of-a-bitch." Your legal people could not say a word about it when confronted with it in a lawsuit other that that I was as they put it disgruntled. Posner also could say little but in that little he confirmed what I'd written about him, that he had trouble telling the truth even by accident. He ignored my referring to him as a plagiarist and as a shyster but he did leave it without question that he has trouble telling the truth even by accident. In his few words for the reprint he said that with Case Open I'd gotten my first commercial publication. No more about all else I'd written about him. And it was my 13th commercial book publication. Other than books it was before Posner's parents were born that I was first published commercially.

No point in taking any more time for Posner's theories. Loomis has enough on them, of far from all.

So it seems that ~~wither~~ whether or not single-shadedly or single-mindedly Posner not only did not put all assassination theories to rest, he could not even persuade his publisher to do that, even though you as his publisher's president seem to think he did. Says so, anyway.

Did you read his book? Without theories he has no book at all. Other than with a few remarkable sources, like the one who did a book, with pictures, saying that nudism is communism. He also regarded the conservative Hale Boggs, a Warren Commission member, as a Communist. I have the literature he distributed saying that. And his book? He and Hebie Badeau in Posner's book. As a prime source.

Some of his other sources could not even read the phone book straight. Not as he used them in any event.

It does seem odd that with your belief that Posner put an end to all assassination theories you published ~~an~~ assassination books based on theories and not in a single instance on fact and they all support the official assassinatuon mythology. With Hollands due soon from his announcement of it and who can guess who you will have if you are making this an annual event despite what you attribute to Posner and his book.

You refer to theories about the assassination in a sense that says there is nothing else. The fact is that there is established fact. And it is official fact. The problem with this official fact, and it is the Posner as well as the official problem, is that it is contray to the official mythology.

It does seem a bit strange that after you say Posner ended all controversy about the assassination for all time you published a book a year about or supposedly about the assassination. It is less strange that each of these now annual Random House ~~wrnnes~~ books supports that official mythology.

The history of the world you have lived through makes clear the great danger to freedom from publishers supporting officialdom regardless of how much officialdom errs or does wrong.

About this recent history is also clear in that it happens only because publishers do not care about it and regard something else as more important and that in the end publishers can be among those who suffer from it.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

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